

MARLBOROUGH TOWN COUNCIL
FULL TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of **Marlborough Town Council** which was held on Monday 7 September 2020
via videoconference

PRESENT: Councillor Mark Cooper Town Mayor
Councillor Bryan Castle
Councillor Mrs Peggy Dow
Councillor Nicholas Fogg
Councillor Andrew Ross
Councillor Alexander Kirk Wilson
Councillor Noel Barrett-Morton
Councillor Lisa Farrell
Councillor Mervyn Hall
Councillor Susie Price
Councillor Andy Wilson
Councillor Donald Heath
Councillor Vanessa Hillier

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs Shelley Parker Town Clerk
Dawn Whitehall Administrator
Clare Harris Assistant Town Clerk
Belinda Richardson Tourism Officer
Fr. John Blacker Mayor's Chaplain
Councillor Stewart Dobson Wiltshire Councillor – Marlborough East
Mr Neil Goodwin Marlborough.News
Plus 11 members of the public, including co-option candidates

PRAYERS

Father John opened the meeting with prayers.

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The **Town Clerk** read out a question on behalf of **Charmaine Bartlett**: Could I raise the issue of air quality in Wiltshire where a recent audit revealed the 18 areas breached safely levels of nitrogen dioxide (defined by WHO as 40 micrograms per cubic metre). We know that Marlborough is at risk because it is bisected by major roads however Wiltshire Council is not monitoring NO2 only particulates. Could the Town Council approach Wiltshire Council to correct this omission? The **Town Mayor** agreed that air quality should be taken seriously, and that later in the meeting Councillors would decide whether to declare a climate emergency.

CRIME AND DISORDER

No officer was available to attend

Councillor Farrell asked whether it would be possible to hold a meeting with the police soon, as they had been unable to attend Town Council videoconference meetings. She was keen to discuss recent problems in the town involving the 18-20 age group, including one incident of assault. The **Town Clerk** would pass this request back to the police.

QUESTIONS TO AND FROM WILTSHIRE COUNCILLORS

Councillor Fogg referred to the Marlborough Mop Fairs, deferred in 2020 as a result of the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic, and asked that that this great tradition should still be commemorated. The **Town Mayor** was committed to the Mop Fairs which were a central

part of the town's calendar. He hoped a ceremony to mark the traditional opening of the Mop Fair would be able to go ahead as planned and that the Mop would return in 2021.

Councillor Dobson referred to the earlier question about air quality. This topic would be part of the forthcoming Area Board meeting on 29 September where there would be a presentation from a Wiltshire Council officer on air quality. He hoped many would attend.

Councillor Dobson also referred to the Amenities & Open Spaces Committee on 1 September where a potential third rugby pitch had been discussed for The Common and asked that when deciding whether to go ahead and where to locate it, that the requirements for the Showmen's Guild in support of the Mop Fairs be borne in mind.

170/20

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Loosmore and Cairns.

171/20

DECLARATIONS

There were no declarations.

172/20

MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor was delighted to be able to open the new play area at Jubilee Field Manton on Wednesday, 2 September. Again, a huge thank you to Manton Community Outdoors for the fundraising towards what was an exciting play area with something for all age groups and to the Manton Residents Association and people of Manton who had all compromised to make this project happen.

Councillors would want to be aware that even though the Dark Skies Fest was postponed until 2021, there were plans to hold a presentation or two online in October 2020. More details could be obtained from Clare Harris, Assistant Town Clerk.

Finally, he was pleased to announce through collaboration with local businesses, the Town Council would be launching a short promotional video to help to promote local independents in and around the High Street. Many thanks to Megan Bowyer of Beauty Fulltime and Edward White at AtLive for this.

173/20

MINUTES

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held 1 September 2020 were approved as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor

174/20

CASUAL VACANCY – CO-OPTION OF TOWN COUNCILLOR (EAST WARD)

Following the resignation of Councillor Ed Northeast, Wiltshire Council confirmed that no requests were received to hold a by-election and that the Town Council was able to co-opt a new Town Councillor to represent the East Ward. Seven candidates had originally come forward, all qualified under the Local Government Act 1972 s.79, with one withdrawing (Louise McCullough) leaving six to consider for co-option:

Kym-Marie Cleasby
David Cliffe
Martin Sims
Vincent Stokes
Caroline Thomas
Jo Waltham

Each candidate made a short presentation and answered questions prior to a vote to determine the successful candidate.

Cllr Dow left the meeting due to internet stability issues

Ahead of the vote **Councillor Kirk Wilson** acknowledged that all were very strong, capable people and any would be an asset to the Town Council. He hoped they would consider putting themselves forward again for the May 2021 local elections if unsuccessful this time.

RESOLVED: that Mrs Jo Waltham is elected as a Town Councillor for Marlborough East Ward

The Town Mayor congratulated Mrs Waltham and thanked all the candidates for putting themselves forward. Again, if they were still interested in standing, there would be another opportunity in May 2021 when this Council completed its four year term.

175/20

TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE

The **Mayor** welcomed **Belinda Richardson, Tourism Officer** and **David Du Croz, Chairman of St Peter's Trust** to the meeting.

Councillors considered a proposal received from St Peter's Trust to create a Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in the church vestry/baptistry, looking ahead to a launch date in the spring of 2021. Councillors also noted that St Peter's next Trustee meeting would take place in October 2020 and by then they intended to have clear proposals in place for consideration so were seeking a decision, in principle, from the Town Council at this stage. Discussion points included:

- Generally a good level of support for the proposal as St Peter's was a prestigious building and would attract tourists
- Whether St Peter's would catch passing trade
- Whether a location more central to the High Street would be preferable
- Whether other sites had been considered and how they compared, for example costs and location
- Whether research into other similar towns' TICs had been conducted
- Whether 5 High Street could accommodate a 'shop front' for the Town Council combined with a TIC
- Whether it represented best value for money compared to other locations
- Whether equipment and technology had yet been considered – it would be preferable to identify what a TIC should contain and then specify the required floor space rather than to find a space then fit the contents to it
- How it would be used considering the small tourist information point already owned by the Town Council at Cooper's Corner adjacent to the coach park, intended to be supplied with maps and leaflets
- How it would be resourced, whether by volunteers, staff, or both and what the additional costs would be
- That it was often hard to find volunteers for local ventures (The Merchant's House was quoted as an example) and the ongoing pandemic would add to that difficulty
- That a lot of progress had been made to improve Marlborough's tourism offering since appointing the Tourism Officer and it was important to see it through
- Whether Great West Way would want to partner with the TIC
- That detailed negotiations had not yet taken place to determine annual costs
- Whether an agreement in principle at this stage would allow some sort of tourism presence at St Peter's even if this proposal was not pursued
- That no budget existed on the Action Plan for a TIC beyond the Coopers Corner building (a small room aimed at those visitors parking in George Lane car park and those travelling by coach)

- That additional costs should be considered for future years, where precepts were likely to be affected by additional devolution of services from Wiltshire Council
- Whether there was enough information available at this point to take a decision

RESOLVED: that Marlborough Town Council agrees, in principle, to register an interest in having a tourist information presence at St Peter's, but that more information is required before a firm financial commitment can be made

176/20

CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION

Councillors noted a report by the Town Clerk and considered a recommendation from the Amenities and Open Spaces Committee (A&OS) that Marlborough Town Council should declare a climate emergency.

The Chairman of A&OS, **Councillor Heath**, outlined the many reasons for doing so and the benefits for all (now and future generations) that result from an accompanying action plan to address the causes and effects of climate change.

Councillor Price drew Councillors' attention to Bradford-on-Avon Town Council which had declared a climate emergency in 2019 and had an impressive strategy in place.

RESOLVED: that Marlborough Town Council will declare a climate emergency and follow up to create an action plan via either a standing agenda item or a working party, taking guidance from the approach of similar town councils such as Bradford-on-Avon

177/20

REMEMBRANCE PARADE AND ARMISTICE DAY 2020

Councillors noted a report from the Civic Secretary that provided information and government guidance, outlining the impact that Coronavirus social distancing requirements would have on arrangements for Remembrance Day and Armistice Day.

It was a great disappointment to all that the usual Remembrance Parade and Armistice Day commemorations would not be possible this year. The discussion included:

- Current guidelines meant that no gatherings of more than 30 people were allowed
- No road closures had been applied for
- Concerns that residents might try to attend the cenotaph even though there would not be safe space to accommodate them
- Whether any actions could be taken to prevent people attending
- Whether the commemorations could be filmed and/or live streamed, although publicising this prior to the day might attract people to attend in person
- Whether an appeal could be made prior to the event to ask people to stay away
- That a gallery of photographs could be made available online as soon as possible after the commemorations

RESOLVED: that the format for Remembrance Day and Armistice Day is changed to reflect COVID restrictions and government guidance as follows:

Remembrance Sunday

- Organisations to collect wreaths from the Town Hall. As numbers are restricted due to social distancing, this will take place in the Assembly Room
- A Mayoral Party consisting of the Town Clerk, officers of Dignity, Revd. Smith, one representative each of Royal British Legion and 4MI Battalion will convene in the Court Room
- The Mayoral Party will be the first of several small groups to approach the War Memorial and lay a wreath

- The Mayor will be present at the War Memorial for the 11.00am two minute silence and Last Post and Reveille
- The Mayoral party will leave the memorial and members of each organisation will attend in small groups to lay wreaths
- Departures from the Town Hall and arrivals at the War Memorial will be timed and co-ordinated by Town Council staff to ensure social distancing can be maintained at all times
- No road closure will be required

Armistice Day

The usual format will still be possible, including the laying of wreaths at the 7th Wilts War Memorial although there will be a limit on numbers attending. Representatives of the Town Council will be limited to 6 with one each representing 4MI and Royal British Legion. School students may not be able to attend although it was hoped the Head Boy and Girl from St John's could be included. In addition, the laying of wreaths at Commonwealth War Graves can be organised to take place as usual with a small group in attendance.

178/20

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH-ON AND CHRISTMAS MARKET 2020

Councillors noted a report by the Assistant Town Clerk setting out proposals for a scaled back event on Friday, 20 November 2020 due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic:

- A stand-alone Christmas market in the High Street starting between 8/9am and finishing at approximately 5/6pm
- The road would remain open to traffic, as it does for the usual Wednesday and Saturday street markets
- Stall holders would be required to supply a COVID-secure risk assessment in accordance with Wiltshire Council guidelines
- The lights would be switched on discretely when it gets dark, and the timing will not be advertised to mitigate against crowds gathering
- It would not be possible to include children's rides, choirs, a brass band or live music

Councillors also noted that Wiltshire Council had been approached and hoped that, as it had been a difficult year, they might agree to waive charges for the suspension of parking to support the event.

Councillor Price asked whether it would be possible to support traders in December with some sort of free parking incentive for customers.

RESOLVED: that a Christmas market should go ahead on Friday 20 November 2020

179/20

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) – SKATEPARK LIGHTING

Members noted a report by the Assistant Town Clerk setting out progress towards adding lighting at the Skatepark. A full planning application had been submitted and quotations obtained, and the selection of the preferred contractor was scheduled for the Full Town Council meeting on 2 November 2020.

Current estimates ranged between £15,000 to £24,000 +VAT. The Town Council budget included an Ear Marked Reserve of £4,460 for the project. Key funders that might normally be approached for financial grants had diverted normal allocations to COVID emergency initiatives, although it was hoped some could still be pursued.

Councillors considered whether to make a financial allocation to the Skatepark lighting from unallocated Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds, as it would meet the necessary criteria.

RESOLVED: to allocate £10,000 from CIL funds for the lighting of the Skatepark

180/20 THE MERCHANT'S HOUSE

Councillors considered nominating a new Town Council Trustee for the Merchant's House Trust. Under the Trusts' terms (registered charity 1010902) two of the eight Trustees should be Town Councillors. **Councillor Ross** was a Town Council Trustee but **Councillor Hall** had recently resigned, instead becoming an ordinary Trustee.

RESOLVED: That **Councillor Wilson** is nominated to the position of Trustee to The Merchant's House Trust

181/20 OUTSIDE BODIES

Wiltshire Association of Local Councils had recently contacted MPs to highlight the financial impact of COVID on larger parish councils, such as Marlborough. Plans were also in place to offer remote training courses.

Allotment Association – an annual general meeting took place by email, whereby elections confirmed new dual roles – allowing co-chairs, co-treasurers etc to be appointed. The Association was considering the feasibility of starter plots at Stonebridge Allotments to help offset a wait list of 17 people. The next meeting was on 28 September.

182/20 COMMITTEE MINUTES

In accordance with paragraph 3.1 of the Scheme of Delegation, Councillors noted the approved minutes of the **Planning Committee** on 6 July, 27 July and 17 August 2020 and the **Amenities & Open Spaces Committee** on 22 June 2020

183/20 MEMBERS QUESTION TIME

No questions had been submitted.

184/20 COMMON SEAL

Proposed by **Councillor Castle** and seconded by **Councillor Fogg** and

RESOLVED: that the Common Seal of Marlborough Town Council be affixed to all documents necessary to give effect to the decisions of the meeting

The meeting closed at 9pm

Signed: Date:
Town Mayor